

Tredager Iron Works  
East of U.S. Route 1,  
Along the James River  
Richmond  
Virginia

HAER No. VA-32

HAER  
VA  
44-RICH  
104-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

VA-32

TREDAGER IRON WORKS

HAER  
VA  
44-RCH  
104—

Date: 1837, 1867.

Location: East of U.S. Route 1, on the north shore of the James River, Richmond, Virginia.

Builder: Joseph Reid Anderson.

Owner: Ethyl Corporation.

Significance: The Tredager Iron Works were an important component of the Antebellum South's industrial economy and played a major role in supplying iron and ordnance to the Confederacy during the Civil War. After the War, the Works continued production until 1952 when they were gutted by fire. Though devoid of most machinery, the Works still retain a fair degree of structural integrity.

Transmitted by: Dan Clement, 1983.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Richmond (in, cit.)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 71.7.51.0008	DATE 7/2/71

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Tredegar Iron Works

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Tredegar Iron Works

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Bounded on the north by James River and Kanawha Canal, bounded on the south by James River, bounded on the west by Rt. 1 (Rt. 301) and from thence extending 4 mi. eastward.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

STATE Virginia	CODE 51	COUNTY: (in cit.)	CODE 760
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>vacant</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Ethyl - Richmond, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:  
P. O. Box 2189

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE  
51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE  
51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN:  
Richmond

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE  
51

STATE: Virginia	COUNTY: Richmond (in cit.)	ENTRY NUMBER 71.7.51.0008	DATE 7/2/71
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FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

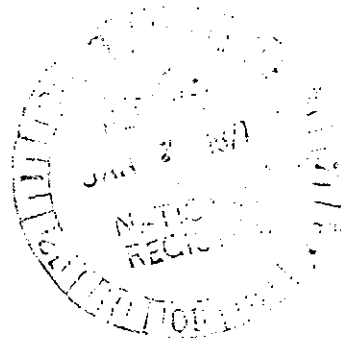
## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Vacant and fire-ridden, the several structures that housed the mills and foundries remain in various stages of ruin, and a majority of the large rooms required for the operating of the foundry stand open or partially open to the sky. These large two and three story gable roof structures were constructed of brick laid in American bond. The wall openings were often in the form of a series of round-headed arches. In spite of their strictly functional nature, the use of decorative brick corbeling, lunettes in the gable ends and iron detailing soften the severity of the structures.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☒ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal

☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Philosophy☒ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☒ Industry☐ Science

History

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Sculpture☐ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Social/Humanitarian☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Theater☐ Commerce☐ Literature☐ Transportation☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Conservation☐ Music

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historians have debated the wisdom of the decision which brought the Confederate capital from the heartland to the periphery of the South during the spring of 1861. The move was inevitable, given the Federal decision to contest Southern Independence by force of arms. The sentiments of the Region notwithstanding, heavy industry was the sine qua non of modern warfare. Richmond, the iron and coal center of the South, was the only truly indispensable city in the Confederacy.

Virginia was a major producer of coal and pig iron during the eighteenth century as readers of William Byrd (Progress to the Mines) and Thomas Jefferson (Notes on Virginia) are aware. Such industries, essentially extractive and technologically primitive, were compatible with a rural and agricultural social order. Existing foundry production was limited to the proverbial swords and plowshares. But an industrial future was predicted, by men like Tench Coxe in 1794, for the seaport at the falls of James River.

Richmond had abundant water power and was adjacent to the major-working-coal fields of America. Access to the sea would be complemented by the James River and Kanawha Canal, which reached to the iron furnaces of the Valley by 1851. By the early-nineteenth century, the city was thriving on the basis of flour mills and tobacco factories, commission-merchant houses and banks, and the coal trade. Two indices of her ante-bellum prosperity were population growth and the many stately residences constructed during that period.

Richmond now had the business acumen and capital, as well as the raw materials necessary to sustain a modern-iron industry. The puddling and rolling mills which rose in the city during the 1830's were a response to the market created by the new railroad industry, as well as the tooling and re-tooling needs of established factories and mills. The Tredegar Iron Works--named for the famous works at Tredegar, Wales--were chartered in 1837.

The Tredegar's rise to preeminence began in 1841, when Joseph Reid Anderson first became associated with the, then nearly bankrupt, company. During a period of severe depression in the American iron industry, Anderson brought Tredegar a measure of prosperity--something which his predecessor as commission-sales agent had been unable to accomplish under more favorable economic conditions. Having no viable alternative, the

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	HAER No. VA-32
Virginia	Page 5
COUNTY	
Richmond (in cit.)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71251.0008	7/2/71

(Number all entries)

8. directors permitted him to assume operation of the Works, first as lessee then as owner, in November 1843.

Anderson paid his final installment for the Tredegar in January 1854. The Tredegar Iron Company was then dissolved debt free and with capital remaining for division among the shareholders. J. R. Anderson and Co., the successor firm, was one of the largest and best equipped iron works in America. The Company had the capacity to produce, in quantity, nearly any conceivable type of finish iron -- for peace or wartime use.

In his definitive Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works, Charles B. Dew epitomizes the tragic flaws of Confederate heavy industry: "Beginning as early as 1862, increasingly acute shortages of raw materials and skilled labor cut Tredegar output sharply." Anderson had no native pool of skilled labor to draw upon when foreign and Northern workers withdrew their services. Severe shortages of raw materials -- inevitable once the blockade was effective, given the poorly developed domestic sources of supply and transportation -- kept Tredegar production at, or below, one-third of capacity for most of the War. At that, Anderson & Co. outproduced every northern ordnance foundry except one.

The Company survived the War; but the Works desperately needed to be reconditioned if they were to be of material assistance in the physical reconstruction of the South. Anderson raised desperately needed fluid capital by the sale of coal mines, and ultimately through dissolution of the partnership in favor of a jointstock venture. The Tredegar Company, incorporated in 1867, successfully attracted Northern capital, while Anderson and his old partners retained control of the firm. The company had more than regained its prewar capacity when, during the Panic of 1873, several of its leading rail customers went bankrupt. The railroads which had made the old company now broke the new.

Iron gave way to steel, but the Tredegar, lacking funds, was unable to make the transition. Richmond gave way to Birmingham; Southern industry to Northern capital; the largest industrial plant of the South became a small local concern. The Tredegar remained in operation until fire gutted the old plant in 1952. The firm, still controlled by the descendants of Joseph Anderson, removed to Chesterfield County at that time.

In ruins, the old Tredegar represents not only a nineteenth-century industrial complex, but also a contemporary expression of the Picturesque spirit of that century which thrived on romantic ruins as well as standing structures. The walls which once supported the broad roof spans are now free-standing arcades and their Romanesque manner conjures up the images of a far earlier age. The old Tredegar Works have a tremendous potential as a part of Richmond's redeveloped river front.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bruce, Kathleen. Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era, chapters II-III. New York, 1930.  
Condit, William Ward. "Virginia's Early Iron Age" in The Iron Worker, Vol. XXIII (Summer 1959), pp. 1-7.  
Dew, Charles B. Ironmaker to the Confederacy. New Haven, Conn., 1966.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	Degrees Minutes Seconds 37 ° 32 ' 12 "	Degrees Minutes Seconds 77 ° 27 ' 02 "		Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	
NE	37 ° 32 ' 12 "	77 ° 26 ' 37 "				
SE	37 ° 32 ' 02 "	77 ° 26 ' 37 "				
SW	37 ° 32 ' 02 "	77 ° 27 ' 02 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 22 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
VA			
VA			
VA			
VA			

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Staff, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, James W. Moody, Jr., Director	
ORGANIZATION Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission	DATE December 18, 1970
STREET AND NUMBER: Room 1116, Ninth Street Office Building	
CITY OR TOWN: Richmond	STATE Virginia
	CODE 51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name Edw. P. Alexander

Title Dr. Edward P. Alexander, Chairman  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date 1/5/71

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ernest A. Connally  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date JUL 2 1971

ATTEST:

William H. Miller  
Keeper of The National Register

Date JUN 7 1971

SEE INSTRUCTIONS